

Subject: Useful Information from Chittenden County Senators August 31, 2011

Dear Town Managers and Administrators,

The havoc caused by Hurricane Irene this week will remain in our minds for a very long time. Many towns in Chittenden County faced devastating impact to its infrastructure, roadways and bridges. However, we can be extremely thankful that we escaped without loss of life.

Unfortunately many of our friends and neighbors suffered tremendously with a loss of their personal property, some even their entire homes. Our emergency management teams, town crews, fire, rescue and police have been doing yeoman's work. As their managers and administrators you have been at the helm, directing and assisting them with carrying out their duties. A debt of gratitude is owed to you, the dedicated town employees, and all of your families.

In times like these communications is of utmost importance. I believe all of you have representatives in emergency management; however, as your Senators we would like to provide you with as much information as possible regarding the state's efforts in the management of this disaster. Some of this information you will be able to use immediately, some of it will be useful for planning in the longer term.

Local Help

Contacting Vermont Emergency Management: Vermonters who have property affected by the storm should still call the state. There are several lines in addition to the 211 number now in operation. Please note that it is critical to acquiring recovery aid that a statewide inventory of the damage is taken. Also, if a property owner makes repairs, it is important to document the repairs and keep receipts for potential assistance.

Individuals: Individuals reporting property damage should still call 211.

Businesses: Businesses should call the Agency of Commerce and Community Development at (ACCD) at 828-3211 to report damage that will be collated for VEM and FEMA. ACCD will also make referrals for financing and technical assistance. The information needed when businesses make the call is: name of business, location (complete address), description of damage, point of contact, date damage occurred. There are additional questions for historic properties.

Farms: To report damages to property such as but not limited to barns, milking parlors, crops, fields, equipment, etc., call your county USDA Farm Service Agency or your county Natural Resources Conservation Services office. Organizations such as the Vermont Farm Bureau (802-434-5646) or NOFA Vermont (802-434-4122) can also be called. These organizations will send a summary of the information to the Agency of Agriculture which will forward it to VEM. Farmers experiencing loss of crops due to flooding should contact their crop insurance agent as well as the USDA Farm Service Agency (802-658-2803).

Emergency Flood Assistance Program for Businesses: The Governor and legislative leaders announced this afternoon their intentions of an expanded version of the Emergency Flood Assistance Program to provide \$10 million of very low interest, no first year payment, loans to businesses which suffered losses due to flooding. This program, administered by VEDA, was created after this spring's floods and there is some money currently available to

jump-start the dissemination of loans. These loans will be administered immediately. Interested businesses should go to VEDA's website (<http://www.veda.org/>) for more information.

Fuel Disposal: If you find a fuel tank on your property or floating in floodwaters, please contact the Vermont Fuel Dealers Association at 802-223-7750 or info@vermontfuel.com.

Federal Help

Initial Federal Response: Yesterday President Obama declared a State of Emergency in Vermont. This means federal funds will be released to be used for immediate emergency related efforts. For example, responders will now have a mobile operational van to assist Vermont's temporary emergency operations center. They expect to be assisting with such activities as the in the removal of debris, engineering support for V-Trans, and possibly helping with ready-to-eat meals for the Red Cross. Costs will be shared 75% federal 25% state.

Public and Individual Assistance: Vermont Emergency Management (VEMA) and FEMA are still primarily in "response" mode, focused on safety and security. Over the week, the efforts will shift to "recovery" mode. Governor Shumlin will be asking President Obama for Public and Individual Assistance under a major disaster declaration. If granted, this declaration would provide significant federal and state assistance to municipalities for repair and replacement of bridges, as well as substantial grant and loan assistance for Vermont families whose homes or apartments were damaged or destroyed. Again, costs will be shared 75% federal/12.5% state/12.5% local.

Disaster aid to individuals generally falls into the following categories:

- “ **Disaster Housing** may be available for up to 18 months, using local resources, for displaced persons whose residences were heavily damaged or destroyed. Funding also can be provided for housing repairs and replacement of damaged items to make homes habitable.
- “ **Disaster Grants**, are available to help meet other serious disaster related needs and necessary expenses not covered by insurance and other aid programs. These may include replacement of personal property, and transportation, medical, dental and funeral expenses.
- “ **Low-Interest Disaster Loans** are available after a disaster for homeowners and renters from the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) to cover uninsured property losses. Loans may be for repair or replacement of homes, automobiles, clothing or other damaged personal property. Loans are also available to businesses for property loss and economic injury.
- “ **Other Disaster Aid Programs** include crisis counseling, disaster-related unemployment assistance, legal aid and assistance with income tax, Social Security and Veteran's benefits. Other state or local help may also be available.

“ **Assistance Process** -- After the application is taken, the damaged property is inspected to verify the loss. If approved, an applicant will soon receive a check for rental assistance or a grant. Loan applications require more information and approval may take several weeks after application. The deadline for most individual assistance programs is 60 days following the President's major disaster declaration.

The first step to acquiring recovery aid is to take a statewide inventory of the damage. ***Vermont businesses, municipalities and individuals should call 211 to report property damages.*** If a property owner makes repairs, it is important to document the repairs and keep receipts for potential assistance.

Reporting damage to 211, however, is not the same as registering for federal disaster aid. If the state does receive a disaster declaration, property owners will have to register separately with FEMA. Stay tuned for more information.

Other useful Websites and Resources:

Vermont Travel Information Services: <http://www.511vt.com/>

This interactive website displays a map of state roads and possible points of incidents/caution. The site is updated daily and as accurate as possible. The %last updated+ feature allows you to see how fresh the information is.

Ride Share: <https://www.rideproweb.com/vt/service.asp?Authenticated=False>

This site is designed for commuters to find car pools, but can be a valuable asset for individuals whose cars are damaged or destroyed.

Vermont Emergency Management Facebook Page:
<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Vermont-Emergency-Management/142566220102>

The most up to date information for VEM can be found on their Facebook page. If you %like+ VEM on Facebook you will be given automatic updates as their status changes. They also have Great links to press releases and other information.

I hope this information has been helpful. I will update you with new information and contacts as they come to me. I will also notify you as soon as we have some definitive answers regarding FEMA's assistance and Federal Highway Grants.

In order for me to keep the proper authorities and departments advised I would appreciate if you would forward to me a list of infrastructure, road and bridge damage in your town. Please contact me, or my legislative assistant, Ashley Grant, at (802) 828-3806, with any questions, suggestions or comments.

Very Truly Yours,

Tim Asche, Philip Baruth, Sally Fox, Ginny Lyons, Hinda Miller, Diane Snelling

Chittenden County Senators